

reinforcing members for an automobile. For example, Japanese Unexamined Patent Laid-Open Publication HEI 11-279685 discloses that for the purpose of producing a high-strength press formed member having excellent impact absorptivity with satisfactory dimensional accuracy and a low production cost, a steel sheet of a specific composition is subjected to a nitriding treatment after press work is completed.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 4, line 5, with the following:

Thus, in the above prior art, an effort is made to improve the strength of a steel sheet itself while ensuring press formability by subjecting the nitriding steel sheet to a nitriding treatment after being press formed. In practice, however, the strength (tensile strength) obtained after the nitriding treatment is around 700 MPa maximum which is not satisfactory. Therefore, it is not possible to obtain a significant reduction of weight and production cost solely using the teachings of Japanese Unexamined Patent Laid-Open Publication HEI 11-279685.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 4, line 15, with the following:

To improve the performance of the vehicle in protecting passengers during a collision, the structural strength of the vehicle may be improved by increasing the thickness of the steel sheet used to form body panel member and structural member of the vehicle. However, this method of increasing structural strength by increasing the sheet thickness of such body parts and structural members is not preferred if such method does not significantly increase the rigidity of the whole body since vehicle body weight and the production cost is increased.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 4, line 25, with the following:

Therefore, it is desirable to provide a one-piece press formed member having portions with different properties from other portions of the formed member which may be, for example, a body panel member or a structural member.